اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi
Surah 53 – An-Najm (The Star)

سُوْرَةُ النَّجْمِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

وَالنَّجْمِ اِذَا هَوٰى ۙ﴿۱﴾

(53-1) By the star when it sets: (1)

(1) In the original the word an-najm has been used. Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and Sufyan Thauri opine that it implies the Pleides. Ibn Jarir and Zamakhshari have held this same interpretation as preferable, for in Arabic when the word an-najm is used absolutely, it usually implies the Pleides. Suddi says that it implies Venus; and Abu Ubaidah, the grammarian, holds that here the word an-najm has been used generically so as to express this idea: When the day dawned, and the stars set. In view of the context we are of the opinion that this last interpretation is more preferable.

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوٰى ۚ﴿۲﴾

(53-2) your companion (2) has neither strayed nor is he deluded; (3)

(2) Your companion: implies the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the addressees are the Quraish. The word Sahib as used in the original means a friend, a companion, a close associate. Here, making mention of the Prophet by the word Sahib-u-kum (your companion) instead of Our Messenger is very meaningful. This is meant to make the people of the Quraish realize: The person being mentioned is no stranger to you. He is not an outsider whom you may not be knowing or recognizing already. He is a man of your own clan and tribe. He lives and moves among you; even your children know who and what he is, what his character is, what are his dealings, what are his ways and habits and characteristics, and how he has passed his life

among you so far. If someone of you were to say an improbable thing about him, there would be a thousand men among you who knew him, who could see for themselves whether what was said actually applied to him or not.

(3) This is the thing for which an oath has been sworn by the setting star or stars. Going astray means a person's adopting a wrong way being unaware of the right way, and being deluded means his adopting the wrong way knowingly and consciously. The verse means: Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a well-known man among you. Your accusation that he has gone astray, or is misguided, is utterly wrong. In fact, he is neither gone astray nor misguided. Here, the propriety of swearing by the setting stars is that in the darkness of the starry night a person cannot see the things of his surroundings clearly, and from their vague appearances can form wrong judgments about them, e.g. he may take a tree for a ghost in the dark, a string for a snake, a rock in the sand for a beast of prey. But when the stars have set and the day has dawned, everything appears before man in its real form and shape, and there remains no doubt whatsoever about the reality of things. The same is also the case of Muhammad (peace be upon him) among you. His life and personality is not hidden in darkness, but is manifest like the bright dawn. You are aware that this companion of yours is a rightminded, wise and sagacious man. How can somebody from among the Quraish have the misunderstanding that he has gone astray? You also know how well-intentioned and honest and righteous person he is. How can one of you form the view that he has knowingly adopted a crooked way not only for himself but has started inviting others also to the same falsehood?

وَ مَا يَ نطِقُ عَنِ الۡهَوٰى ؕ﴿۳﴾

(53-3) nor does he speak out of his desire.

اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحۡىٌ يُّوۡحٰى ۙ﴿۴﴾

(53-4) This is nothing but a revelation that is conveyed to him, (4)

(4) It means this: The things for which you accuse him of having gone astray or been misled and deceived, have neither been fabricated by himself nor motivated by any selfish desire on his part, but they have been sent down, and are being sent down, to him by God. He did not intend to become a Prophet of his own desire so that he might have laid a claim to Prophethood in order to satisfy his desire, but when Allah appointed him to that office through revelation, then only did he rise to preach his mission and to tell you that he had been appointed God's Messenger to you. Likewise, this invitation to Islam, this teaching of the doctrine of Tauhid, this news about the gathering together of all mankind on the Day of Resurrection and their accountability, the truths that he is presenting about the universe and man and the principles of leading a pure life, are not a philosophy propounded by himself, but the knowledge of all this has been bestowed on him by revelation. Likewise, this Quran that he recites before you, is also not of his own composition but it is divine word which is sent down to him by revelation. "He does not speak of his own desire; It is not but a revelation that is revealed."

Here, the question arises: Which of the words spoken by the Prophet (peace be upon him) are Allah's Words: Do they apply to everything that he spoke, or to some of his words and not to others? The answer is: As far as the Quran is concerned, the divine words apply to it most completely. As for the other words, apart from the Quran, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke, they could inevitably be of three kinds:

First, those words which he employed for preaching religion and inviting others to Allah, and for explaining the themes, teachings and commands of the Quran, or for giving admonition and instruction to the people to fulfill the object for which the Quran was revealed. In this regard, obviously nobody can have the doubt that, God forbid, he fabricated these things from his own mind. In these matters, his position, in fact, was of the official interpreter of the Quran and of Allah's authorized representative. Although these things were not revealed to him literally as the Quran was revealed; yet these were necessarily based on the same knowledge that he had been given by

revelation. The only difference between the Quran and these was that the Quran, both in word and in meaning, was entirely from Allah, and in these other things the meanings were those taught by Allah and the words those which he himself employed to express those meanings. On the basis of this very distinction, the Quran has been described as wahi-jali (manifest revelation) and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) other sayings as wahi-khafi (concealed revelation).

The second kind of the words were those which the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke in connection with the struggle of raising Allah's Word and his services for establishing Islam. In this regard, he had to perform countless duties of different kinds as the leader and guide of the Muslim community. In this many a time he took counsel with his companions as well, and followed their advice instead of his own view. On being asked he sometimes told them that he was expressing a particular view not under Allah's command but as his personal opinion, and on several occasions it so happened that he said something on the basis of his own opinion and later an instruction came down against it from Allah. None of the things of this nature that he said or did could be based on a selfish motive. As for the question whether these sayings were based on divine inspiration, the answer is that except for the things in regard to which he made it explicit that they were not based on divine command, or about which he took counsel with his companions and accepted their advice, or with regard to a thing against which Allah sent down an instruction after he had said or done something on the basis of his personal judgment, all other things were based on concealed revelation (wahi-khafi) just like the things of the first kind. For the office of the leader and guide of the Islamic movement and the chief of the believing community and the ruler of the Islamic State, which he held, was not self-invented or bestowed by the people, but he had been appointed to it by Allah, and whatever he said and did in carrying out the duties of this office, his position in it was of the representative of divine, will. In this matter, whatever he said on the basis of his personal judgment, his judgment in those matters was approved by Allah, and was, derived from the light of the knowledge which Allah had blessed him with. That is why whenever his personal judgment was even

slightly turned away from Allah's pleasure, it was immediately rectified by manifest revelation (wahi-jali). This rectification of some of his personal judgments is itself a proof that all the rest of his religious judgments and interpretations were precisely in accordance with divine will.

The third kind of the things were those he said concerning common matters of life as a man, which had nothing to do with the duties of Prophethood, which he said before being appointed a Prophet as well as continued saying even after having been appointed a Prophet. About this kind of the things it should be understood at the outset that there was no dispute with the disbelievers concerning them. They had not accused him of being a misled and misguided person because of these but because of the first two kinds of the things. These things were not disputed and therefore could not become the cause of a verse from Allah. But although they were not the subject of any dispute, yet the fact is that in this private aspect of his life also never did the Prophet (peace be upon him) utter a word that was opposed to the truth, but at all times, under all conditions, his words and deeds remained within the bounds that Allah had prescribed for living his life as a Prophet (peace be upon him) and righteous man. Therefore, the light of revelation shone in that sphere as well. This same thing has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in some authentic Ahadith. In Musnad Ahmad a tradition has been related on the authority of Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said: I never say anything but what is true and right. A companion said: O Messenger of Allah, you say things sometimes in jest also. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Indeed, I never say anything but the truth. According to Musnad Ahmad and Abu Daud, Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas is reported to have said: I used to write down whatever I heard from the sacred tongue of the Prophet (peace be upon him) so as to preserve it. The people of the Quraish forbade me to do this, saying: You are writing down everything whereas the Prophet (peace be upon him) is a man: he sometimes says things in the state of anger too. At this I gave up writing. Afterwards when I mentioned this before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: You should continue writing: By

Him in Whose hand is my life, never have I said anything but the truth. (For a complete discussion of this question, see my book Tafhimat vol. 1, Article: Prophethood and its Injunctions).

عَلَّمَهٗ شَدِيۡدُ الۡقُوٰى ۙ﴿۵﴾

(53-5) something that a very powerful one has imparted to him, [5]

(5) That is, there is no human being who teaches him this, as you seem to think, but he obtains this knowledge through a supernatural source. According to some people, mighty in power implies Allah Himself, but a great majority of the commentators agree that it implies the Angel Gabriel. This same view has been reported from Abdullah bin Masud, Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Qatadah, Mujahid and Rabi bin Anas. Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Razi, Alusi and others also have adopted this very view. Shah Waliyullah and Ashraf Ali Thanwi also have followed this same view in their translations. And the fact is that from the other explanations of the Quran, this very thing is also confirmed. In Surah Takweer it has been said: This indeed is the word of a noble Messenger, who has great power and high rank with the Owner of the Throne: there he is obeyed and held as trustworthy. And (O people of Makkah), your companion is not mad. He has seen that Messenger on the bright horizon. (verses 19-23). Then, in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 97), the Angel has been mentioned by name through whom this teaching had been revealed on the heart of the Prophet (peace be upon him): Say to them, whoever is enemy to Gabriel should understand that he has, by Allah's command, revealed to your heart the Quran. If these verses are read with this verse of Surah An-Najm, there remains no doubt that here mighty in power implies the Angel Gabriel and not Allah.

Here, some people express the doubt as to how the Angel Gabriel can be regarded as the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teacher. For this would mean that he was the teacher and the Prophet (peace be upon him) his pupil, and this would place him above the Prophet (peace be upon him) in rank. But this suspicion is misplaced, because Gabriel did not impart

instruction to the Prophet (peace be upon him) from any personal knowledge of his own, which might give him superiority over the Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah, in fact, had made him a means of conveying knowledge to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he was the Prophet's (peace be upon him) teacher in the metaphoric sense for being only a medium of instruction. That does not give him any superiority whatever. To quote an example: After the Prayer was prescribed five times a day, Allah sent Gabriel to teach the Prophet (peace be upon him) the correct times of the Prayers, and he led him in the Prayers five times daily for two days. This has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi and Muwatta and other collections of the Ahadith, with authentic chains of reporters, and in this the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has explained that he was the follower and Gabriel his leader in the Prayers. But his being made the leader only for the purpose of instruction does not mean that he was superior to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in rank.

ذُو مِرَّۃٍ ؕ فَاسۡتَوٰی ۙ﴿۶﴾

(53-6) one endowed with immense wisdom. (6) He came forth and stood poised,

(6) Ibn Abbas and Qatadah take dhu mirra-tin of the text in the meaning of beautiful and grand. Mujahid, Hasan Basri, Ibn Zaid and Sufyan Thauri say that it means: strong and powerful. Saeed bin Musayyab has expressed the opinion that it means wise. In a Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) has used this word in the sense of healthy and sound. In Arabic usage this word is used in the meaning of sound in judgment, wise and learned also. Allah has chosen this word for Gabriel here because he possesses both intellectual and physical powers to the highest degree.

وَ ہُوَ بِالۡاُفُقِ الۡاَعۡلٰی ؕ﴿۷﴾

(53-7) being on the higher horizon. (7)

(7) The horizon means the eastern edge of the sky where the sun rises and the day dawns. The same has been referred to as ufuq-mubin (bright horizon) in(Surah Takwir, Ayat 23). Both the verses make it explicit that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw Gabriel for the first time, he had appeared on the eastern horizon of the sky; and there are several authentic traditions which show that at that time he was in his real shape in which Allah has created him. We shall quote all such traditions below.

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلّٰی ۙ﴿۸﴾

(53-8) Then he drew near and hung above suspended,

فَکَانَ قَابَ قَوۡسَیۡنِ اَوۡ اَدۡنٰی ۚ﴿۹﴾

(53-9) until he was two bows' length away, or nearer. (8)

(8) That is, After appearing on the uppermost edge of the sky, Gabriel started advancing towards the Prophet (peace be upon

him) till he reached and hung suspended about him in midair. Then he bent down to him and came within just two bow-lengths or even closer. The commentators generally have taken qaba-qausain in the meaning of two bow-lengths, but Abdullah bin Abbas and Abdullah bin Masud have taken qaus in the meaning of a dhira (an armlength, cubit), and have interpreted the words kama qaba qausain, saying that the distance between them was reduced to only two arm-lengths. And since all bows are not equal in length, the approximate distance has been expressed by two bow-lengths away or even closer.

فَاَوحٰی اِلٰی عَبۡدِہٖ مَاۤ اَوحٰی ﴿۱۰﴾

(53-10) Then he revealed to Allah's servant whatever he had to reveal. (9)

(9) The sentence faauha ila abdihi ma auha of the text can have two translations:

(1) He (Gabriel) revealed to His (Allah's) servant whatever he revealed.

(2) He (Allah) revealed to His own servant whatever He revealed.

According to the first translation, the meaning would be: Gabriel revealed to the servant of Allah whatever he had to reveal; according to the second: Allah revealed through Gabriel to His servant whatever He had to reveal. The commentators have given both these meanings; the first meaning, however, fits in better with the context, and the same has been reported from Hasan Basri and lbn Zaid. Here, the question may be asked: How can the pronoun of abd-i-hi turn to Allah instead of to the subject of auha, whereas Allah has nowhere been mentioned from the beginning of the Surah to this place? The answer is that wherever it becomes apparent from the context that the antecedent of a pronoun refers to a particular person, the pronoun turns to him automatically whether it has been mentioned before or not. There are several instances of this available in the Quran itself. In Surah Al-Qadr, Ayat 1, Allah says: We have sent it down in the night of

glory. There is no mention of the Quran in this sentence, but the context explicitly shows that the antecedent of the pronoun is the Quran. At another place Allah says: If Allah were to seize the people because of their misdeeds, He would not leave any creature (unpunished) on its back. In this sentence there is no mention of the earth anywhere, but the context clearly shows that its back implies the earth's back. In (Surah Yaseen, Ayat 69), it has been said: We have not taught him poetry, nor does poetry behoove him. Here, there is no mention of the Prophet (peace be upon him), neither before this sentence nor after it, yet the context is explicit that the antecedent of the pronouns is the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. In (Surah Ar-Rahman, Ayat 26), it has been said: Whatever exists on it shall perish. There is no mention of the earth either before or after it, but the style clearly shows that the pronoun of alaiha turns to it. In Surah (Al-Waqiah, Ayat 35), it has been said: We shall have created them especially. There is no noun or pronoun before or after it to which the pronoun of hunna may be referring. It is apparent from the context that it signifies the women of Paradise. Thus, as auha ila abdi hi cannot at all mean that Gabriel revealed to his servant, the meaning necessarily would be that Gabriel revealed to the servant of Allah, or that Allah revealed to His own servant through Gabriel.

مَا كَذَبَ الۡفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى ﴿١١﴾

(53-11) His heart added no untruth to what he saw.
(10)

(10) That is, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) observed all this in broad daylight in the waking condition, with open eyes, his heart did not deem it was a delusion, or that it was a jinn or a devil, who had appeared before him, or that it was an imaginary figure, or a vision that he was seeing while awake. His heart fully confirmed what his eyes saw that it was the Angel Gabriel and the message he was conveying was indeed God's revelation to him.

Here, the question arises: How is it that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not entertain any doubt at all concerning such a wonderful and extraordinary observation, and he confirmed with

full faith that whatever his eyes saw was a real face and not an imaginary figure, nor a jinn nor devil? When we consider this question deeply we are led to five reasons for it:

First, that the external conditions in which this observation was made, testified to its truth and validity. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not observe this in darkness, or in a state of meditation, or in a vision, or in a sleep-like condition, but the day had dawned and he was fully awake, and he was seeing the whole scene in the broad daylight in the open with his own eyes precisely in the way as one sees the other things in the world. If doubt is cast on this, then whatever we see in the day time, e.g. rivers, mountains, men, houses, etc., also would become doubtful and illusory.

Second, that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own internal condition also testified to its validity. He was in his full senses. He had no idea whatever in his mind that he should observe, or that he was going to observe such a thing. His mind was absolutely free from such a thought and any longing for it, and in this state he met with this experience suddenly. There was no room for doubting that the eyes were seeing an actual scene, but that an imaginary thing had appeared before his eyes.

Third, that the being who had appeared before him in that condition was so marvelous and magnificent, so beautiful and bright, that neither had he ever had any concept of such a being before that he could take it for a product of his own imagination, nor could a jinn or a devil have such an appearance that he would have taken him for a being other than an angel. Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I saw Gabriel in the shape that he had six hundred wings. (Musnad Ahmad). In another tradition, Ibn Masud has further explained that each single wing of Gabriel was so extensive that it seemed to be covering the whole horizon. (Musnad Ahmad). Allah Himself has described him as shadid al-quwa (one mighty in power) and dhu-mirra (one endowed with great wisdom).

Fourth, that the teaching that the being was imparting also testified to the validity of the observation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had no concept of the knowledge that he received suddenly through him, a knowledge that comprehended the realities and truths of the whole universe. About if he could not have the doubt that it consisted of his own ideas which were being set and arranged by his own mind. Likewise, there was no ground for thinking either that it was Satan who was imparting that knowledge to him and thus deluding him, for it is not for Satan that he should teach, nor can he ever teach, the doctrine of Tauhid to man as against polytheism and idol worship, that he should warn of the accountability of the Hereafter, that he should create contempt against ignorance and its practices, that he should invite people to moral excellences, and should exhort a person not only to accept that teaching himself but should also rise to eradicate polytheism, injustice, wickedness and sin from the world and replace these evils by the virtues of Tauhid, justice, equity and piety.

The fifth and by far the most important reason is that when Allah chooses a certain person for His Prophethood, He cleanses his heart of doubts and suspicions and evil suggestions and fills it with faith and conviction. In that state no hesitation or vacillation is caused in his mind about the validity of whatever his eyes see and his ears hear. He accepts with complete satisfaction of the heart every truth that is revealed to him by his Lord, whether it is in the form of an observation that he is made to witness with the eyes, or in the form of knowledge which he is inspired with, or in the form of a revelation that is recited to him literally. In all these cases the Prophet is fully aware that he is absolutely safe and secure against Satanic interference of every kind, and whatever he is receiving in any form is precisely and definitely from his Lord. Like all God-given feelings this sense and feeling of the Prophet also is a certainty which does not admit of any misunderstanding. Just as the fish has a God-given sense of being a swimmer, the bird of being a bird, and the man of being a man, and there can be no likelihood of any misunderstanding in this regard, so has the Prophet also a God given sense of his being a Prophet. He does not even for a moment entertain the

doubt that he has perhaps been involved in the misunderstanding of being a Prophet.

اَفَتُمٰرُوْنَهٗ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى ﴿١٢﴾

(53-12) Are you, then, going to contend with him regarding what he sees with his eyes?

وَ لَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿١٣﴾

(53-13) Indeed he saw him a second time,

عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى ﴿١٤﴾

(53-14) by the lote-tree at the farthest boundary,

عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَاْوٰى ﴿١٥﴾

(53-15) near which is the Garden of Abode. (11)

(11) This is about the Holy Prophet's second meeting with Gabriel in which he appeared before him in his real shape and nature. The place where this meeting took place has been described as Sidrat-al-muntaha, along with which it has been said that nearby it is located Jannat-al-mava (Garden of Repose).
Sidrah in Arabic means the lote-tree and muntaha the extreme edge or limit. Thus, literally, sidrat-al-muntaha means the lote-tree that is situated on the extreme edge or limit. Allama Alusi in his Ruh al-Maani has explained it thus: At this the knowledge of every learned man comes to an end; whatever is beyond it is known to none but Allah. Almost the same explanation of it has been given by Ibn Jarir in his commentary, and by Ibn kathir in An-Nihayah fi Gharib alHadith wal-Athar. It is difficult for us to know what kind of a lote-tree it is that is situated at the farthest end of this physical world and what is its nature and state. These are the mysteries of the divine universe which are incomprehensible for us. In any case, it is some such thing for which there was no more appropriate word than sidrah in human language, in the sight of Allah.

Jannat al-mava literally means the Jannat (Garden) that is to be an abode. Hasan Basri says that this is the same Jannat which the believers and righteous will be given in the Hereafter, and from this same verse he has argued that that Jannat is in the heavens. Qatadah says that this is the Jannat in which the souls of the martyrs are kept, it does not imply the Jannat that is to be given in the Hereafter. Ibn Abbas also says the same but adds that the Jannat to be granted to the believers in the Hereafter is not in the heavens but here on the earth.

اِ ذۡ یَغۡشَی السِّدۡرَ مَا یَغۡشٰی ﴿۱۶﴾

(53-16) (This was) when the lote-tree was covered with that which covered it. (12)

(12) That is, its splendor and glory exceeds all description. The divine glory and effulgence was such as can neither be conceived by man nor can any human language depict it adequately.

مَا زَاغَ الۡبَصَرُ وَ مَا طَغٰی ﴿۱۷﴾

(53-17) His eye did not waver, nor did it stray, (13)

(13) That is, on the one hand, the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah was so firm and steadfast that even in the presence of the great divine splendor and glory his sight was not dazzled and he went on gazing at it with great composure. On the other hand, he was in such complete control of himself and so exclusively attentive that he kept his mind and his sight focused upon the object for which he had been summoned, and he did not let his sight wander to any side like a spectator's to have a glimpse of the wonderful objects present there. This can be understood by the example of a person who gets an opportunity to be present in the court of a mighty and powerful king, where he comes across such glory and splendor that had never even been conceived by him before. Now, if he be a shallow person, he would be struck with amazement, and if he be un-initiated in the court etiquette, he would become heedless of the royal presence and would turn his gaze to every side to look at the embellishments of the court. But a noble, reverent and dutiful person will neither be stupefied and confounded, nor will become lost in witnessing the court, but will present himself with full dignity and will keep his mind concentrated on the object for which he had been summoned in the royal court. This very virtue and quality of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been esteemed in this verse.

لَقَدۡ رَاٰی مِنۡ اٰیٰتِ رَبِّہِ الۡکُبۡرٰی ﴿۱۸﴾

(53-18) and he certainly saw some of the greatest Signs of His Lord. (14)

(14) This verse clearly states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not seen Allah but His wonderful sings. Even according to the context, this second meeting also took place with the same being with whom the first meeting had taken place. Therefore, one will have to admit that neither the one whom he had first seen on the uppermost horizon was Allah nor he whom he saw afterwards by the farthest lote-tree was Allah. Had he seen Allah Almighty on either occasion it would have been a great thing and must certainly have been mentioned here explicitly. About the Prophet Moses it has been said in the Quran that he had besought to see Allah And the reply given was: Lan tarani You cannot sec Me. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 143). Now, obviously this honor was not granted to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Had it been granted to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it would by itself have been such an important thing which must have been stated in clear words. But we see that nowhere in the Quran has it been said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen his Sustainer and Lord. But in Surah Bani-Israil also, where mention has been made of the event of Miraj (Ascension), it has been said that: We had transported Our servant...so that We may show him some of Our signs, (linuriya- hu min ayat-ina), and here also in connection with his visit at sidrat al-muntaha, it has been said: He saw of the greatest signs of His Lord (laqad ra a min ayat-i Rabb-i-hil kubra).

In view of these reasons apparently there was no ground for the dispute whether the Prophet (peace be upon him) on both these occasions had seen Allah Almighty or the Angel Gabriel. But, the reason that has given rise to this dispute is that the traditions of Hadith differ on this question. Below we reproduce in their sequence the Ahadith that have been reported from the different companions in this regard:

(1) Traditions of Aishah: Masruq, as stated in Kitab at-Tafsir of Bukhari, asked Aishah: O mother of the faithful. Had Muhammad (peace be upon him) seen his Lord and Sustainer?

She replied: Your question has terrified me. Why do you forget that if a person lays claim to three of the things, he would lay a false claim? (The first of these things that Aishah mentioned was): Whoever among you says that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had seen his Lord and Sustainer, tells a lie. Then Aishah recited these verses: La tudriku-hul-absar: Eyes cannot comprehend Him; and: Makanali-bashar-in anyyukallima-hullah-u ills wahy-an au min-wara-i-hijab-in au yursila rasul an fayu-hia bi-idhni hi ma yasha-u: It is not given to any mortal that Allah should speak to him, face to face; He, speaks either through revelation (secret instruction), or from behind a curtain, or He sends a messenger (an angel), who by Allah's command, reveals whatever He wills. (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayat 51). Then she said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) in fact had seen Gabriel in his real shape twice.

A part of this Hadith is also found in Bukhari (chapter 4 of Kitab atTauhid) And in the tradition that Bukhari has cited from Masruq in Kitab Bida aI-Khalq, he states: Hearing this thing from Aishah, I asked: What would then Allah's words, Thumma dana fa-tadalla, fa-Kana qaba qausain-i au adha: mean? She replied: This refers to Gabriel; he always appeared before the Prophet (peace be upon him) in human shape, but on this occasion he had appeared before him in his real shape and nature and the whole horizon was filled with him.

In Muslim (Kitab al-Iman, Babu fi Dhikr Sidrat almuntaha) this conversation between Aishah and Masruq has been related in greater detail, its most important part being this: Aishah said: The one who claims that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had seen his Lord and Sustainer imputes a lie to Allah. Masruq says: I was leaning back. Hearing this I sat up and said: Mother of the faithful, do not make haste: Has not Allah said: wa laqad raa-hu biufuq- i mubin? and laqad raa-hu nazlat-an ukhra. Aishah replied: I was the first one in this ummah who inquired of the Prophet (peace be upon him) about this. He had replied: It was Gabriel. I have never seen him in his real shape and form in which Allah has created him except on these two occasions. On these two occasions I saw him descending from the heavens and

his great presence was covering the whole space between the earth and the heavens.

Ibn Marduyah has related this tradition of Masruq, thus: Aishah said: I was indeed the first person who asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Did you ever see your Lord and Sustainer? He replied: No, I had only seen Gabriel descending from the heavens.

(2) Traditions of Abdullah bin Masud: Bukhari (Kitab at-Tafsir), Muslim (Kitab al Iman) and Tirmidhi (Abwab at-Tafsir) contain a tradition on the authority of Zirr bin Hubaish, saying that Abdullah bin Masud gave this commentary of fa-kana qaba qausain-i au adha: The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw Gabriel in the shape that he had six hundred wings.

In the other traditions of Muslim, Zirr bin Hubaish has reported this very commentary of Ma kadhab al-fu adu ma raa and laqad ra a min ayat-i Rabbi-hil kubra from Abdullah bin Masud.

In Musnad Ahmad this commentary of Ibn Masud has been reported by Abdur Rahman bin Yazid and Abu Wail also besides Zirr bin Hubaish. Furthermore, in Musnad Ahmad two more traditions of Zirr bin Hubaish have been related in which Abdullah bin Masud commenting upon wa laqad raa-hu nazlat-an ukhra, inda-sidrat-ilmuntaha stated: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah said that he saw Gabriel by the lote-tree, he had six hundred wings. Imam Ahmad has also cited a tradition on the same subject, on the authority of Shaqiq bin Salamah, in which he states that he heard Abdullah bin Masud saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had said that he had seen Gabriel in that shape at sidrat al-muntaha.

(3) When Ata bin Abi Rabah asked Abu Hurairah the meaning of the verse laqad raa-hu nazlat-an ukhra, he replied: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen Gabriel. (Muslim: Kitab al lman).

(4) Imam Muslim has related in kitab al-Iman two traditions of Abdullah bin Shaqiq on the authority of Abu Dharr Ghifari, in one of which he says that he asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Did you ever see your Lord? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Nur-un anna ara-hu; and in the other he says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave this answer to his question: Raaitu nur-an. Of the first answer of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Ibn al-Qayyim has given this meaning in his Zadal-Maad: Between me and the sight of my Lord there was Light, and of the second this: I did not see my Lord but only a Light.

Nasai and Ibn Abi Hatim have reported the saying of Abu Dharr, thus: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen his Lord with the heart (mind), not with the eyes.

(5) Imam Muslim in his Kitab al-Iman has related this tradition from Abu Musa al-Ashari: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The sight of no one from among His creatures has reached Allah Almighty.

(6) Traditions of Abdullah bin Abbas: According to Muslim, when Abdullah bin Abbas was asked the meaning of: Ma kadhab al-fu adu ma ara, wa laqad raa hu nazlat-an ukhra, he said: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah saw his Lord twice with his heart. This tradition is also contained in Musnad Ahmad.

Ibn Marduyah has cited this saying of Ibn Abbas, on the authority of Ata bin Abi Rabah: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had not seen Allah with the eyes but with the heart.
Nasai contains a tradition from Ikrimah saying that Ibn Abbas said: Do you wonder at this that Allah made the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) His friend, blessed Moses (peace be upon him) with His Word and honored Muhammad (peace be upon him) with His sight? Hakim also has cited this tradition and held it as authentic.

In Tirmidhi, there is a tradition from Shabi to the effect that Ibn Abbas said in a gathering: Allah had distributed His sight and His Word between Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Moses (peace be upon him). He spoke to Moses twice, and Muhammad saw Him twice. Hearing these very words of Ibn Abbas, Masruq had approached Aishah with the question: Had Muhammad (peace be upon him) seen his Lord? She had replied: What you have said has made my hair stand on end. After this the same dialogue that we have cited above under the tradition of Aishah took place between Aishah and Masruq.

In one of the traditions reported in Tirmidhi from Ibn Abbas, he says: The Prophet had seen Allah Almighty. In yet another he says: He had seen Him twice, and in a third one: He had seen Him with the heart.

In Musnad Ahmad, a tradition from Ibn Abbas is to the effect: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I saw my Lord, the blessed, the exalted. In another tradition he says: The Messenger of Allah said: Tonight my Lord came to me in the best

shape. I think that by this the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant that he saw Allah Almighty in a vision.

Tabarani and Ibn Marduyah have related this tradition also from Ibn Abbas: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had seen his Lord twice, once with the eyes and the second time with the heart.

(7) Muhammad bin Kab al-Qurzi states that when some of the companions asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Did you ever see your Lord? He replied: I have seen Him twice with my heart. (Ibn Abi Hatim). Ibn Jarir has related this very tradition, thus: He said: I have not seen Him with the eye, but with the heart twice.

(8) A tradition of Anas bin Malik which Imam Bukhari has cited in his Kitab at-Tauhid in connection with the event of the Miraj, on the authority of Sharik bin Abdullah, contains words to the effect: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) reached sidrat al-muntaha, Allah Almighty drew near him and hung suspended above him till there remained between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Him a distance equal to two bow-lengths or even less. Then, what Allah revealed to him included the command for 50 Prayers. But, besides the objections that Imam Khattabi, Hafiz lbn Hajar, Ibn Hazm and Hafiz Abdul Haq (author of Al-Jam bain al-Sahihain) have raised in respect of the authenticity and subject-matter of this tradition, the main objection against it is that it clearly contradicts the Quran, for the Quran mentions two separate occasions when the experience of the vision took place, the first initially at the uppermost horizon to which reference has been made in: Dane fa-tadalla, fa-kana qaba qausain-i au adna, and a second time near sidrat al muntaha. But this tradition mixes up the two occasions and presents them both as one occasion of the vision. Therefore, because of its being contradictory to the Quran, it cannot be acceptable in any case.

As for the other traditions that we have cited above, the weightiest among them are those that have been related from Abdullah bin Masud and Aishah, for both of them

have unanimously reported this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself that on neither occasion he had seen Allah but Gabriel, and these traditions fully conform to the explanations and allusions of the Quran. Furthermore, they are also confirmed by the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which Abu Dharr and Hadrat Abu Musa al-Ashari have reported from him. On the contrary the traditions that have been cited from Abdullah bin Abbas in the books of Hadith are self-contradictory. In some he regards both the experiences as a vision with the eyes, in some both as a vision with the heart, in some one with the eyes and the other with the heart, and in some he wholly negates the vision with the eyes. In none of these traditions he has cited any saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself and where he has cited such a saying, it contains no mention of either of the two experiences stated in the Quran; besides, the explanation of one of his traditions given by the other indicates that the Prophet at some time had seen Allah Almighty not in the waking condition but in a vision during sleep. Therefore, in fact, for the commentary of these verses the traditions ascribed to Abdullah bin Abbas cannot be held as reliable. Likewise, although the traditions of Muhammad bin Kaab al-Qurzi cite a saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him), they do not mention the names of the companions who might have heard this thing from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. Moreover, in one of them it has been said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had clearly denied having seen Allah with the eyes.

اَفَرَءَيۡتُمُ اللّٰتَ وَ الۡعُزّٰى ﴿۱۹﴾

(53-19) Have you ever thought about al-Lat and al-Uzza, (15)

(15) That is, you regard the teachings being given to you by Muhammad (peace be upon him) as erroneous and falsehood, whereas he is being given this knowledge by Allah, and Allah has made him see with his own eyes the verities to which he is testifying before you. Now consider it for yourself as to how irrational are the beliefs that you are following persistently and as to whom you are causing loss by opposing and resisting the person who is guiding you to the right way. In this connection, especially the three goddesses that were worshiped generally by the people of Makkah, Taif and other parts of Hejaz have been taken as an example. About them, they have been asked: Have you ever considered rationally whether they could have even the slightest role in the affairs of the Godhead of the earth and heavens? Or could they bear any relationship whatever with the Lord of the Universe?

The shrine of Lat was in Taif and the Bani Thaqif were so devoted to it that when Abraha was advancing to Makkah with his army of elephants to destroy the Kabah, the people only in order to save the temple of their deity had provided the wicked man with guides to lead him to Makkah so that he should spare Lat, whereas like all the Arabs the people of Thaqif also believed that the Kabah is Allah’s House. Scholars have disputed the meaning of Lat. According to Ibn Jarir Tabari, it is the feminine gender of Allah, i.e. originally this word was allahatun which became al-Lat. According to Zamakhshari, it is derived from hva yalvi, which means to turn to or bow to somebody. As the polytheists turned to it for worship and bowed to it and circumambulated it, it began to be called Lat. Ibn Abbas reads it as Latt (with a stress on t) and holds it is derived from latt yalittu, which means to churn and mix together. He and Mujahid state that this, in fact, was a man, who lived on a rock near Taif, and used to entertain the pilgrims to Makkah with barley drinks and food. When he died the people built a shrine to him on the same rock and began to worship him.

But this explanation of Lat, in spite of having been reported on the authority of scholars like Ibn Abbas and Mujahid, is not acceptable for two reasons. First, that in the Quran it has been called Lat and not Latt; second, that the Quran describes all the three as goddesses, and according to this tradition Lat was a man, not a woman.

Uzza is derived from izzat, and it means the one (female) enjoying veneration and respect. This was the special goddess of the Quraish and her shrine was situated at Hurad in the valley of Nakhlah, between Makkah and Taif. The people of Bani Shaiban, who were the allies of the Bani Hashim, were its attendants. The Quraish and the people of other tribes paid visits to it and presented offerings and made sacrifices to it. As for the Kabah, sacrificial animals were driven to it also and it was held in the highest esteem. Ibn Hisham relates that when Abu Uhaihah was on the point of death, Abu Lahab paid him a visit and found him weeping. Abu Lahab asked, Why do you weep, Abu Uhaihah? Are you afraid of death? And death is the destiny of everybody. He said: By God, I do not weep because of the fear of death, but I am grieved to think as to how Uzza will be worshipped after me. Abu Lahab said: It was neither worshipped for your sake in your lifetime, nor will it be given up after you have left the world. Abu Uhaihah said: Now I am satisfied that there are people who will take my place after me.

The shrine of Manat was situated at Qudaid by the Red Sea between Makkah and Madinah, and the people of Khuzaah and Aus and Khazraj were in particular its great devotees. People visited it as pilgrims, circumambulated it and made offerings and sacrifices before it. In the Hajj months as soon as the pilgrims became free from their visit to the Kabah and the religious services at Mina and Arafat, they would start raising cries of labbaik, labbaik even there for the purpose of visiting Manat, and the people who intended to go on this second hajj did not run between the Safa and the Marwah.

وَ مَنٰوةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ﴿٢٠﴾

(53-20) and about the third deity, al-Manat?

اَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَ لَهُ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿۲۱﴾

(53-21) Shall you have the male issues, and He the female issues? (16)

(16) That is, you held these goddesses as daughters of Allah, Lord of the worlds, and did not consider while inventing this absurd creed that as for yourselves you regarded the birth of a daughter as disgraceful, and desired to have only male children, but as for Allah you assign to Him only daughters.

تِلْكَ اِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيْزٰى ﴿۲۲﴾

(53-22) That is indeed an unfair division!

اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّاۤ اَسْمَآءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَاۤ اَنْتُمْ وَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَ مَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ وَ لَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدٰى ﴿۲۳﴾

(53-23) These are nothing but names that you and your forefathers have invented, for which Allah has sent down no authority. (17) They are merely following their conjectures and their carnal desires (18) although guidance has come to them from their Lord. (19)

(17) That is, those whom you call gods and goddesses are neither gods nor goddesses, nor do they possess any attribute of divinity, nor any share whatever in the powers of Godhead. You have of your own whim made them children of God and deities and associates in Godhead. Allah has sent down no authority which you may produce as a proof in support of your presumptions.

(18) In other words, the basic causes of their deviation are two: First, that they do not feel any need for the knowledge of reality for the purpose of adopting a creed and religion, but make a supposition on the basis of a mere conjecture and then put belief in it as though it were the reality, Second, that they have, in fact,

adopted this attitude in order to follow the desires of their souls: they desire that they should have such a deity as should help them attain their aims and objects in the world, and if at all there is to be a Hereafter, it should take the responsibility to have them granted forgiveness there too, But it should not impose any restriction of the lawful and the unlawful on them nor should bind them in any discipline of morality. That is why they do not feel inclined to worship One God as taught by the Prophets, and only like to worship these invented gods and goddesses.

(19) That is, in every age the Prophets appointed by Allah have been guiding these wicked people to the truth, and now Muhammad (peace be upon him) has come to tell them as to whom belongs Godhead in reality in the universe.

اَ مۡ لِلۡاِنۡسَانِ مَا تَمَنّٰی ۪ ﴿۲۴﴾

(53-24) Does man imagine that whatever he wishes for is right for him? (20)

(20) Another meaning of this verse can be: Is man entitled to take anyone he pleases as his god? Still another meaning can be: Can the desire of man to have his prayers answered by these gods ever be fulfilled?

فَلِلّٰهِ الۡاٰخِرَةُ وَ الۡاُوۡلٰی ﴿۲۵﴾

(53-25) To Allah belong both the Next World and the present.

وَ كَمۡ مِّنۡ مَّلَكٍ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ لَا تُغۡنِیۡ شَفَاعَتُهُمۡ شَیۡـًٔا اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ اَنۡ یَّاۡذَنَ اللّٰهُ لِمَنۡ یَّشَآءُ وَ یَرۡضٰۤی ﴿۲۶﴾

(53-26) Numerous are the angels in the heavens; yet their intercession shall be of no avail, except in regard to those whom He grants the leave of intercession and whose plea He is pleased to accept. (21)

(21) That is, even if all the angels together intercede for a person, it cannot be beneficial for him not to speak of the intercession by these invented deities of yours, which can do no one any good. All the powers of Godhead rest with Allah. Even the angels cannot dare intercede for somebody before Him unless He permits it and is pleased to hear their intercession in his behalf.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّوۡنَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةَ تَسۡمِيَةَ الۡاُنۡثٰى ﴿۲۷﴾

(53-27) Those who do not believe in the Hereafter give angels the names of females, (22)

(22) That is, their first folly is that they have taken these powerless angels who cannot even intercede for anyone before Allah as their deities. Their second folly is that they regard them as female and daughters of Allah. The basic reason for these errors is that they do not believe in the Hereafter. For, had they been believers in the Hereafter, they would never have behaved so irrationally and irresponsibly. Their denial of the Hereafter has made them heedless of their end, and they think that believing or disbelieving in God, or believing in a thousand gods, does not make any difference, for none of these creeds seems to entail any good or bad result in the present life of the world. Whether the people are deniers of God, or believers in many gods, or in One God, their crops ripen as well as fail, they fall ill as well as recover from illness, and they pass through all kinds of circumstances, good as well as bad. Therefore it is not at all an important and serious matter for them that man should or should not take someone as a deity, or should take as many deities or of any kind as he likes of his choice. When according to them the decision as to what is truth and what is falsehood is to take place in this very world, depending on the results thereof appearing here, obviously the results here do not decide absolutely that one creed is true and another false. Therefore, the adoption of one creed and rejection of another is a matter of mere whim with these people.

وَ مَا لَهُمۡ بِهٖ مِنۡ عِلۡمٍ ؕ اِنۡ يَّتَّبِعُوۡنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۚ وَ اِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغۡنِىۡ مِنَ الۡحَقِّ شَيۡـًٔا ﴿۲۸﴾

(53-28) although they have no knowledge regarding that. They only follow their conjecture [23] and conjecture can never take the place of the Truth.

(23) That is, they have not adopted this creed about the angels on the ground that they had found through some means of knowledge that they were females and daughters of God, but they have presumed this on mere conjecture and have set up these shrines at which they pray for fulfillment of desires, make offerings and pay tributes.

فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡ مَّنۡ تَوَلّٰى عَنۡ ذِكۡرِنَا وَلَمۡ يُرِدۡ اِلَّا الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا ﴿۲۹﴾

(53-29) So leave alone those who turn away from the remembrance of Us [24] and who seek nothing but the life of the world [25] –

(24) Dhikr here may imply the Quran as well as mere admonition; it may also mean that he does not like that even God be mentioned before him.

(25) That is, you should not waste your time in making him understand the truth, for such a person will never be inclined to accept any invitation which is based on God worship, which calls to objects and values higher than the material benefits of the world, and according to which the real aim of life may be the eternal success and well-being of the Hereafter. Instead of spending your time and energy on such a materialistic and ungodly person, you should devote attention to the people who are inclined to heed the remembrance of Allah and are not involved in the worship of the world.

ذٰلِكَ مَبۡلَغُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنۡ ضَلَّ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنِ اهۡتَدٰى ﴿۳۰﴾

(53-30) that [26] being the utmost of their knowledge. [27] Surely your Lord fully knows those who have strayed away from His Path and He also fully knows those who are rightly guided.

(26) This is a parenthetical sentence which has been inserted here as an explanation of the preceding verse.

(27) That is, these people neither know nor can think anything beyond the world and its immediate gains; therefore, it is futile merely to spend time and energy on them.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَاۗءُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا بِالْحُسْنٰى ۝٣١

(53-31) To Allah alone belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. (28) He will (29) requite the evil-doers for their deeds and bestow a goodly reward on those who have done good,

(28) In other words, neither the question whether a person is gone astray or is on right guidance, is to be decided in this world, nor has its decision been left to the judgment of the people of the world; the decision rests with Allah. He alone is the Master of the earth and heavens and He alone knows which way, out of the different ways being followed by the people of the world, is the way of guidance and which of error and deviation. Therefore, you should least bother if the polytheistic Arabs and the Makkan disbelievers think you are deluded and misguided and regard their own ignorance as truth and guidance. Leave them alone if they wish to remain lost in their falsehood. You need not waste your time in disputing with them.

(29) The theme is resumed here and connected as a continuous whole with Verse 29. Without the parenthesis, it would read: Leave him alone so that Allah may requite the evildoers for their evil deeds.

الَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰۗىِٕرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ اِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذْ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاِذْ اَنْتُمْ اَجِنَّةٌ فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۝٣٢

(53-32) on those who avoid grave sins [30] and shameful deeds, [31] even if they may sometimes stumble into lesser offences. [32] Surely your Lord is abounding in His Forgiveness. [33] Very well is He aware of you since He produced you from the earth, and while you were still in your mothers' wombs and not yet born. So do not boastfully claim yourselves to be purified. He fully knows those that are truly Godfearing.

(30) For explanation, see(E.N. 53 of Surah An-Nisa).

(31) For explanation, see (E.N. 130 of Surah Al-Anam) and (E.N. 89 of Surah An-Nahl).

(32) The word lamam as found in the original is used for a small quantity of something, or its slight effect, or its mere closeness, or its existence for a short time. This word is used to express the sense that a person did not commit an act but was very near to committing it.

On the basis of its usages some commentators have taken the word lamam in the meaning of minor sins. Some others have taken it in the meaning that a person should practically reach very near a grave sin but should desist from actually committing it. Still others take it in the sense of a person’s remaining involved in a sin temporarily and then desisting from it. And according to some it implies that a person should think of, or wish, or intend to commit a sin but should rake no practical steps towards it. In this regard, the views of the companions and their immediate followers are as follows:

Zaid bin Aslam and Ibn Zaid opine, and a saying of Abdullah bin Abbas is also to the same effect, that it signifies those sins which the people had committed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, then after embracing Islam they refrained from them.

Another view of Ibn Abbas is, and the same is also the view of Abu Hurairah, Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas, Mujahid, Hasan Basri and Abu Salih, that it implies a person’s being involved in a

grave sin or indecency temporarily, or occasionally, and then giving it up.

Abdullah bin Masud, Masruq and Shabi say, and the same has also been reported from Abu Hurairah and Abdullah bin Abbas in authentic traditions, that this implies a person's approaching the very point of a grave sin and crossing all its preliminaries but then restraining himself at the final stage, e.g. a person goes out with the intention of stealing but refrains from it in the end, or has close association with other women, but refrains from committing adultery.

Abdullah bin Zubair, Ikrimah, Qatadah and Dahhak say that this signifies those minor sins for which no punishment has been prescribed in the world nor any threat of punishment held out in the Hereafter.

Saeed bin al-Musayyab says that this implies one's thinking of a sin in the mind but restraining himself from committing it practically.

These are the different explanations which have been reported in the traditions from the companions and their immediate followers. The majority of the later commentators and doctors of law and jurists are of the opinion that this verse and Verse 31 of Surah An-Nisa classify sins into two main kinds: the major sins and the minor sins, and these two verses give man the hope that if he abstains from the major sins and open indecencies, Allah will overlook his minor errors. Although some distinguished scholars have also opined that no sin is minor and the disobedience of Allah is by itself a major sin, yet as stated by Imam Ghazali the distinction between the major and the minor sins is something which cannot be denied, for the sources of knowledge of the Shariah values and injunctions all point to this.

As for the question, what is the distinction between the major and the minor sins, and what kinds of sins are major and what kinds of them minor? we are satisfied that: Every such act is a major sin which has been forbidden by a clear ordinance of the

divine Book and the Shariah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), or for which Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) have prescribed a punishment in the world, or have held out a threat of punishment in the Hereafter, or have cursed the one guilty of committing it, or given the news of infliction of punishment on those guilty of committing it. Apart from this class of sins all other acts which are disapproved by the Shariah, come under the definition of minor sins. Likewise, the mere desire for a major sin, or an intention to commit it, is also not a major sin but a minor sin; so much so that even crossing all the preliminaries of a major sin does not constitute a major sin unless one has actually committed it. However, even a minor sin becomes a major sin in case it is committed with a feeling of contempt for religion and of arrogance against Allah, and the one guilty of it does not consider the Shariah that has declared it an evil worthy of any attention and reverence.

(33) That is, the forgiveness for the one guilty of minor sins is not for the reason that a minor sin is no sin, but for the reason that Allah Almighty does not treat His servants narrow-mindedly and does not seize them on trifling faults; if the servants adopt piety and abstain from major sins and indecencies, He will not seize them for their minor errors and will forgive them magnanimously on account of His infinite mercy.

اَفَرَءَيۡتَ الَّذِىۡ تَوَلّٰى ﴿۳۳﴾

(53-33) (O Prophet), did you see him who turned away (from the Path of Allah),

وَ اَعۡطٰى قَلِيۡلًا وَّ اَكۡدٰى ﴿۳۴﴾

(53-34) who gave a little, and then stopped? (34)

(34) The reference is to Walid bin Mughirah who was one of the prominent chiefs of the Quraish. According to Ibn Jarir Tabari, this person had first become inclined to accept the invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but when a polytheist friend of his came to know of his intention to become a Muslim, he counseled

him not to give up his ancestral faith, and asked him that if he was afraid of the punishment of the Hereafter, he should pay him a certain amount of money and he would take the responsibility to suffer the punishment on his behalf. Walid accepted the offer and turned away from Allah’s way. Then he paid only a little of the amount that he had promised to his polytheist friend and withheld the rest, The allusion to this incident was meant to toll the disbelievers of Makkah what kind of errors and follies they were involved in because of their heedlessness of the Hereafter and their ignorance of the divine religion.

اَعِنۡدَہٗ عِلۡمُ الۡغَیۡبِ فَہُوَ یَرٰی ﴿۳۵﴾

(53-35) Does he have any knowledge of the world beyond the ken of sense-perception, and therefore, clearly sees (the Truth)? (35)

(35) That is, does he know that this conduct is in any way beneficial for him? Does he know that a person can save himself even in this way from the punishment of the Hereafter?

اَمۡ لَمۡ یُنَبَّاۡ بِمَا فِیۡ صُحُفِ مُوۡسٰی ﴿۳۶﴾

(53-36) Has he not been informed of what is in the Scrolls of Moses,

وَ اِبۡرٰہِیۡمَ الَّذِیۡ وَفّٰۤی ۙ﴿۳۷﴾

(53-37) and of Abraham, who lived up to the trust? (36)

(36) In the following verses a resume is being given of the teachings sent down in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses (peace be upon them). The Books of Moses (peace be upon him) signify the Torah. As for the Books of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) they have become extinct and no mention of them is found even in the holy scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Only in the Quran at two places have some parts of the teachings contained in the Books of the Prophet Abraham been cited, here and in the concluding verses of Surah Al-Ala.

اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَۃٌ وِّزۡرَ اُخۡرٰی ۙ﴿۳۸﴾

(53-38) “That no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another, (37)

(37) From this verse three cardinal principles are derived:

(1) That every person is responsible for himself for what he does.

(2) That the responsibility of one man’s act cannot be transferred to another unless he has a share in the commission of the act.

(3) That even if a person wishes he cannot take on himself the responsibility of another man’s act, nor can the actual culprit be let off on the ground that another person is willing to suffer the punishment on his behalf.

وَ اَنۡ لَّيۡسَ لِلۡاِنۡسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰى ﴿۳۹﴾

(53-39) and that man shall have nothing but what he has striven for, (38)

(38) From this verse also three important principles are derived:

(1) That every person will get only the fruit of his own deeds.

(2) That the fruit of one man's deeds cannot be given to another unless he has a share in that deed.

(3) That none can attain anything without striving for it.

Some people wrongly apply these three principles to the economic problems of the world and conclude that no person can become the lawful owner of anything except of his own earned income. But this conclusion clashes with several laws and injunctions given by the Quran itself, e.g. the law of inheritance, according to which many individuals inherit a person and are regarded as his lawful heirs, whereas the heritage is not their earned income. As for a suckling for instance, it cannot be proved by any stretch of imagination that its labor had any share in the wealth left by its father. Likewise, there are the injunctions about the zakat and voluntary charities according to which the wealth of one man is transferred to others only on the basis of their legal and moral entitlement and they become its lawful owners, whereas in the production of this wealth they did not make any contribution at all. Thus, it is against the intention of the Quran to take a verse of it and derive from it such conclusions as clash with the other teachings of the Quran itself.

Some other people regard these principles as concerning the Hereafter and raise the question whether, according to these principles, the deeds of one man can in some way be also beneficial for the other person, and whether the deeds of a person which he does for another person, or on his behalf, can be accepted from him, and whether it is also possible that a person may transfer the reward of his act to another. If the answer to

these questions be in the negative, the sending of spiritual rewards (isal thawab) for the dead and performing Hajj on behalf of another, would be inadmissible; even the prayer of forgiveness for the other person would be meaningless, for this prayer also is not the concerned person's own act and deed. However, this extreme point of view has been adopted by none among the followers of Islam except the Mutazilites. Only they take this verse in the meaning that one man's acts and deeds can in no case be beneficial for the other. On the contrary, the followers of the sunnah are unanimous that the prayer of one man is beneficial for the other because it is confirmed by the Quran; however, they differ only in details, and not in principles, as to whether the sending of spiritual rewards for another and doing a good work on behalf of another is beneficial or not.

(1) The term isal-thawab means that after a person has performed a good act, he may pray to Allah to grant its rewards to another. In this regard, Imam Malik and Imam Shafei have expressed the opinion that the rewards of the pure bodily acts of worship, e.g. the Prayer, the Fasting and recitals of the Quran, etc. cannot reach the other person; however, the rewards of one's monetary acts of worship, e.g. charities, or Hajj, which is a combination of the monetary and bodily worships, can reach the other, for the principle is that one man's act should not be beneficial for the other. But since according to authentic Ahadith the rewards of charities can be conveyed, and Hajj on behalf of another also can be performed, they admit the permissibility of conveying of rewards to the extent of this kind of the acts of worship only. On the contrary, the Hanafi viewpoint is that a man can send the reward of each of his virtuous acts as a gift to the other, whether it is the Prayer, or the Fast, or the recitation of the Quran, or remembrance of Allah, or charity, or Hajj and Umrah. The argument is that just as a man after carrying out a piece of work can tell the master to pay the wages to such and such other person instead of him, so after performing a good deed also he can pray to Allah to grant its rewards to such and such other person instead of him. In this there is no rational ground for making exception of some kinds of virtues and keeping it

restricted to some other kinds of virtues. The same is confirmed by a large number of the traditions:

A tradition, on the unanimous authority of Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Jabir bin Abdullah. Abu Rafi, Abu Talhah Ansari and Hudhaifah bin Usaid al-Ghifari has been reported in Bukhari, Muslim. Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Majah, Tabari, in Awsat, Musradrik and Ibn Abi Shaibah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) got two rams and sacrificed one on behalf of himself and his family and the other on behalf of his ummah.

Muslim, Bukhari, Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai have related a tradition from Aishah to the effect that a person said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): My mother has died suddenly. I think if she had a chance to speak, she would have asked me giving away something in charity. Now, if I give away something in charity on her behalf, will she get a reward for it? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, she will.

In Musnad Ahmad there is a tradition from Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas to the effect, that his grandfather, Aas bin Wail, had vowed in the pre Islamic days of ignorance to sacrifice 100 camels. His uncle, Hisham bin Aas, sacrificed fifty camels of his own share. Amr bin Aas, asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) as to what he should do. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If your father had affirmed faith in the Oneness of God, you may observe fasts on his behalf or give something in charity, this would be beneficial for him.

A tradition has been reported in Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai and Ibn Majah, on the authority of Hasan Basri, to the effect that Saad bin Ubadah asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): My mother has died. Should I give something in charity on her behalf? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied in the affirmative. Several other traditions bearing on the same subject also have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Nasai, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, etc. on the authority of Aishah, Abu Hurairah and Ibn Abbas. According to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted giving away of something in

charity on behalf of the deceased person describing it as beneficial for him.

According to Daraqutni, a person said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): I have been serving my parents while they were alive, what should I do now when they are dead? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: This would also be their service if you offered the Prayer on their behalf along with your own Prayers, and observed the Fast on their behalf along with your own Fast. Another tradition in Daraqutni has been related from Ali according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If a person passing by the graveyard recites: Qul huwallahu ahad eleven times and gives away its reward for the dead, all the dead ones will be granted their due shares of the rewards.

This large number of the traditions which support one another explicitly state that the transfer of the spiritual rewards is not only possible but rewards of all kinds of acts of worship and virtuous deeds can be sent and conveyed and in it there is no specification of any particular kind of acts and deeds. In this connection, however, four things should be understood well:

First, that the reward of that act only can be transferred, which may have been performed purely for the sake of Allah and according to the Shariah injunctions; otherwise obviously an act which is performed for the sake of another than Allah, or in contravention of the Shari ah injunctions, cannot even entitle its doer himself to any reward, nothing to say of its transfer to another person.

Secondly, the gift of the rewards will certainly reach to those righteous persons who are staying as guests with Allah, but no rewards are expected to reach to those culprits who are placed in confinement there. The gift can reach the guests of Allah but the criminals of Allah cannot be expected to receive it. If a person sends his rewards to him because of a misunderstanding, it will not go waste but instead of reaching the culprit it will return to the actual worker himself just like the money order which returns

to the sender in case it does not reach the one to whom it has been sent.

Thirdly, the transfer of the reward is possible but not the transfer of punishment. That is, it is possible that one may do a good deed and may willingly transfer its reward to the other and it reaches him, but it is not possible that one may commit a sin and transfer its punishment to the other and it reaches him.
The fourth thing is that a virtuous act is beneficial in two ways: First, on account of its those results which accrue to the soul and morality of the doer himself because of which he becomes worthy of a reward in the sight of Allah; Second, on account of the reward which Allah grants him as a gift and favor. The transfer of the spiritual reward does not concern the first but only the second. This can be understood by an example. A person tries to attain proficiency in the art of wrestling by constant practice. The strength and skill thus gained is in any way specially meant for his own self; it cannot be transferred to another. Similarly, if he is attached to a royal court, and there is a stipend fixed for him as a wrestler, he alone will receive it and no one else. However, in respect of the prizes and gifts that his patron may like to grant him as an appreciation for his creditable performance, he may request that they may be given to his coach, or parents, or some other benefactor, on his behalf. The same is the case with the virtuous deeds: their spiritual benefits are not transferable and their rewards also cannot be transferred to another, but as for their rewards and gifts he can pray to Allah that these may be granted to a near and dear one, or a benefactor of his. That is why it is termed as isal thawab (conveying of spiritual rewards) and not as isal jaza (conveying of material reward).

(2) Another form of a person’s work being beneficial for another is that one should either do a virtuous deed on the desire or beckoning of another, or without his desire or beckoning, on his behalf, which, in fact, was obligatory for him to carry out, but which he was unable to carry out himself. In this regard, the Hanafi jurists say that the acts of worship are of three kinds: purely physical, e.g. the Prayer; purely monetary, e.g. the zakat; and the compound acts of bodily and monetary worship, e.g. Hajj.

As for the first kind, nobody can act as an agent of another. As for the second kind, one can act as an agent of the other, e.g. the husband can pay the zakat due on the ornaments of the wife. As for the third kind, one can act as an agent of the other only in case the actual person on whose behalf the act is being performed, is permanently, and not just temporarily, unfit to carry out his obligation himself. For example, Hajj can be performed on behalf of another only in case the person concerned is unable to go for Hajj himself, nor may have the hope that he would ever be able to perform it himself. The Malikis and the Shafei is also concur on, this. However, Imam Malik lays down the condition that if the father has willed that his son should perform Hajj after him, on his behalf, the son can perform Hajj on his father's behalf, otherwise not, But the traditions in this regard are very explicit. Whether the father has expressed the desire, or made a will or not, the son can perform Hajj on his behalf.

Ibn Abbas has related that a woman from the tribe of Khatham said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): The command for Hajj reached my father at a time when he has become very old: he cannot even sit on the camel's back. The Prophet replied (peace be upon him): You then may perform Hajj on his behalf. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidi, Nasai). A tradition bearing on the same subject has also been related by Ali. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi).

Abdullah bin Zabair has made mention of a man of the same tribe of Khatham, who also put a similar question to the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning his aged father. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: Are you his eldest son? He answered in the affirmative. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If your father had left behind a debt and you paid it off, would it stand paid on his behalf? He replied that it would. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Then you should likewise perform Hajj also on his behalf. (Ahmad, Nasai). Ibn Abbas relates that a woman from the tribe of Juhainah came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: My mother had vowed to perform Hajj but she died before performing her vow. Now, can I perform Hajj on her behalf? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If your mother had left behind a debt, would you not have paid it?

Likewise, you should also discharge the vow made to Allah, and Allah has a greater right that the vows made to Him be performed. (Bukhari, Nasai). Bukhari and Musnad Ahmad contain another tradition to the effect that a man came and put the same question to the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning his sister as has been mentioned above, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him also the same answer.

These traditions provide a clear proof that so far as the compound acts of bodily and monetary worships are concerned, one can act on behalf of another. As for the purely bodily acts of worship, there are some Ahadith which prove the permissibility of acting on behalf of another in this kind of worship as well. For example, Ibn Abbas has related that a woman from the tribe of Juhainah asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): My mother had vowed to observe the Fast and she died without performing her vow. Now, can I observe the Fast on her behalf? The Prophet replied (peace be upon him): Observe the Fast on her behalf. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Daud). And Buraidah's tradition that a woman asked concerning her mother: She had one month's (according to another tradition two months) Fasts to observe; can I observe those Fasts on her behalf? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that she could. (Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud). And Aishah's tradition that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If a person dies and he had some Fasts to observe, his guardian should observe those Fasts on his behalf. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad). In the tradition related by Bazzar the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words are to the effect: If his guardian may so like, he may observe those Fasts on his behalf). On the basis of these very traditions the Ashab al-Hadith and Imam Auzai and the Zahiris have formed the view that one is also permitted to perform bodily acts of worship on behalf of the other. But Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafei and Imam Zaid bin Ali have given the ruling that a fast cannot be observed on behalf of a dead person, and Imam Ahmad, Imam Laith and Ishaq bin Rahawaih opine that this can be done only in case the deceased person might have so vowed but might not have been able to perform his vow. Those who oppose this give the argument that the reporters of the Ahadith, which prove its permissibility, have

themselves given their rulings against it. Ibn Abbas's ruling has been related by Nasai, thus: No one should offer a Prayer or observe a Fast on behalf of another. And Aishah's ruling, according to Abdur Razzaq, is: Do not observe the Fast on behalf of your dead ones; feed (the needy) instead. The same has also been related from Abdullah bin Umar by Abdur Razzaq that the Fast should not be observed on behalf of the deceased person. This shows that in the beginning it was permissible to perform acts of bodily worship on behalf of others, but the practice that became established in the end was that it was not permissible to do so; otherwise it was not possible that those who have reported these Ahadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him), should have themselves given rulings against them.

In this connection, it should be understood well that fulfillment of an obligation on behalf of another can be beneficial only to those people who have themselves been keen and desirous of fulfilling their obligations and might have been unable to do so being rendered helpless by circumstances. But a person who deliberately shirked going for Hajj although he had the necessary means for it and had no feeling whatever of this obligation in his heart either, cannot be benefited even if several Hajj be performed on his behalf afterwards. This would be analogous to the case of a person who deliberately avoided paying his debts and had no intention to pay them till the last. Afterwards even if every penny is paid off on his behalf, he would remain a debtor in the sight of Allah. The payment of the debts by another can relieve only such a person who in his lifetime was desirous of paying off his debts but was unable to do so due to straitened circumstances.

وَ اَنَّ سَعۡیَهٗ سَوۡفَ یُرٰی ﴿۴۰﴾

(53-40) and that (the result of) his striving shall soon be seen, (39)

(39) That is, in the Hereafter the people's deeds shall be examined and judged in order to see what provisions they have brought with them. As this sentence occurs immediately after the

preceding sentence, it by itself indicates that the preceding sentence relates to the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter, and the view of those who present it as an economic principle relating to this world is not correct. To interpret a verse of the Quran in a way as is irrelevant to the context as well as clashes with the other ordinances of the Quran cannot be right.

ثُمَّ يُجۡزٰٮهُ الۡجَزَآءَ الۡاَوۡفٰى ﴿۴۱﴾

(53-41) and that he shall then be fully recompensed,

وَ اَنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الۡمُنۡتَهٰى ﴿۴۲﴾

(53-42) and that the final end is with your Lord,

وَ اَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَضۡحَكَ وَ اَبۡكٰى ﴿۴۳﴾

(53-43) and that He it is Who causes people to laugh and to cry, (40)

(40) That is, Allah provides the means both for joy and for grief. He controls good and ill luck. There is no one else in the universe, who may have anything to do with making or marring of destinies.

وَ اَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَمَاتَ وَ اَحۡيَا ﴿۴۴﴾

(53-44) and that He it is Who causes death and grants life,

وَ اَنَّهٗ خَلَقَ الزَّوۡجَيۡنِ الذَّكَرَ وَ الۡاُنۡثٰى ﴿۴۵﴾

(53-45) and He it is Who created the two kinds, the male and the female,

مِنۡ نُّطۡفَةٍ اِذَا تُمۡنٰى ﴿۴۶﴾

(53-46) from a drop of sperm when it was emitted, (41)

(41) For explanation, see (E.Ns 27 to 30 of Surah Ar-Rum); (E.N. 77 of Surah Ash-Shura).

وَ اَنَّ عَلَیَ النَّشۡاَۃَ الۡاُخۡرٰی ﴿۴۷﴾

(53-47) and that it is for Him to grant the second life, (42)

(42) When this verse is read with the two preceding verses, the sequence by itself seems to provide the argument for the life-after-death also. The God Who has the power to give death and grant life and the God who brings about a creature like man from an insignificant sperm-drop, rather brings about two separate sexes - male and female - from the same substance and by the same method of creation, cannot be helpless to resurrect man once again.

وَ اَنَّہٗ ہُوَ اَغۡنٰی وَ اَقۡنٰی ﴿۴۸﴾

(53-48) that He it is Who bestowed wealth and riches, (43)

(43) Different meanings have been given by the lexicographers and commentators of the word aqna as used in the original. According to Qatadah, Ibn Abbas took it in the meaning of arda (pleased), and according to Ikrimah in the meaning of qannaa (satisfied). According to Imam Razi, whatever is given to a person over and above his need and requirement is aqna. Abu Ubaidah and several other lexicographers have expressed the view that aqna is derived from qunya-tun, which means lasting and secured property, e.g. the house, lands, gardens, cattle, etc. Ibn Zaid, however, has given quite a different meaning of it. He says that aqua here has been used in the sense of afqara (made penniless), and the verse means: He made whomever He pleased rich and whomever He pleased penniless.

وَ اَنَّہٗ ہُوَ رَبُّ الشِّعۡرٰی ﴿۴۹﴾

(53-49) that He is the Lord of Sirius, (44)

(44) Shiera is the brightest star in the heavens, which is also known by the names of Mirzam al-Jawza, al-Kalb al-Akbar, al-Kalb al-Jabbar, Ash-Shira al-Abur, etc. In English it is called Sirius, Dog Star and Canis Majoris. It is 23 times as luminous as the Sun, but as it shines over eight light-years away from the earth, it appears to be smaller and less luminous than the Sun. The Egyptians worshiped it, for it made its appearance at about the time of the season when the annual floods were beginning in the Nile; the Egyptians believed that Sirius caused the Nile floods. The pagan Arabs also held the belief that this star influenced human destinies. That is why they worshiped it as a deity, and the Bani Khuzaah, the neighboring tribe of the Quraish, were particularly well-known for being its devotees. What Allah says means: Your destinies are not made and controlled by Shiera but by the Lord of Shiera.

وَ اَنَّهٗۤ اَ هۡلَكَ عَا دَا لۡاُوۡلٰى ۙ﴿۵۰﴾

(53-50) that He it is Who destroyed the ancient 'Ad,
(45)

(45) Aad Ula signifies the ancient Aad to whom the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him) had been appointed as a Prophet. When those people were inflicted with the torment in consequence of denying the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him), only the believers escaped the punishment. Their descendants are called Aad Ukhra, or the latter Aad, in history.

وَ ثَمُوۡدَا فَمَاۤ اَبۡقٰى ۪﴿۵۱﴾

(53-51) and Thamud, leaving no trace of them,

وَ قَوۡمَ نُوۡحٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا هُمۡ اَظۡلَمَ وَ اَطۡغٰى ؕ﴿۵۲﴾

(53-52) and that He it is Who destroyed the people of Noah before for they were much given to iniquity and transgression.

وَ الۡمُؤۡتَفِكَۃَ اَهۡوٰی ۚ ﴿۵۳﴾

(53-53) And He brought perdition upon the subverted cities

فَغَشّٰىهَا مَا غَشّٰی ۚ ﴿۵۴﴾

(53-54) and caused them to be covered with that which He covered them with. (46)

(46) “The subverted settlements”: the settlements of the people of Lot, and “covered them that which did cover” probably imply the waters of the Dead Sea, which spread over their settlements after they had sunk underground, and covered the region even till this day.

فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکَ تَتَمَارٰی ﴿۵۵﴾

(53-55) So, (47) which of your Lord's bounties will you doubt?” (48)

(47) According to some commentators this sentence is also a part of the resume of the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses, (peace be upon them) and according to others it ended with Fa ghashsha-ha ma ghashsha, and with this begins a new theme. According to the context, however, the first view seems to be preferable, for the following words This is a warning of the warnings already given, point out that the whole preceding passage is “of the warnings already given”, which had been sent down in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses (peace be upon them).

(48) The word tatamara, as used in the text, means both to doubt and to wrangle. The address is directed to every listener. To every person who may be listening to this discourse, it is being said: Even after witnessing what has been the fate in human history of denying the bounties of Allah and of wrangling with the Prophets concerning them, will you still commit the same folly? What the former peoples had doubted was whether the bounties

and blessings they were enjoying in the world, had been bestowed by One God, or by other associates of His, or by no one, but had become available by themselves. On account of this they wrangled with the Prophets. The Prophets asserted that all these blessings had been granted to them by God, and by One God alone; therefore, they should be grateful to Him and should serve Him alone; but the people did not believe this and wrangled with the Prophets on this very account. Now, O man: Don't you see in history what fate these nations met for entertaining this doubt and for their wrangling? Will you entertain the same doubt and indulge in the same wrangling as proved disastrous for others?

In this connection, one should also bear in mind that the Aad and the Thamud and the people of Noah had passed long before the Prophet Abraham, and the people of Lot had met with the torment during his own lifetime. Therefore, there can be no difficulty in regarding this passage as a part of the resume of the Prophet Abraham's Books.

هٰذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الۡاُوۡلٰى ﴿۵۶﴾

(53-56) This is a warning among the warnings of yore. (49)

(49) The words in the original are: Hadha nadhir-un-minan-nudhur-il-ula. The commentators have expressed three points of view in the explanation of this sentence. First, that nadhir here implies the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); second, that it implies the Quran; third, that it implies the fate of the peoples already destroyed, which has been referred to in the foregoing verses. In view of the context, we are of the opinion that this last commentary is preferable.

اَزِفَتِ الۡاٰزِفَةُ ﴿۵۷﴾

(53-57) The imminent Hour has drawn near, (50)

(50) That is, do not be under the delusion that there is yet enough time for thinking and consideration; therefore, you may

not give immediate and serious attention to these things and may not decide that you should accept them without further delay. Nay: no one among you knows how much of the respite of life is left to him. Anyone of you can die at any time and the Last Hour can also take place suddenly. Therefore, do not think that the Hour of Judgment is yet far off. Whoever has any concern for the Hereafter, should mend his ways forthwith, for one may not have a chance to take a second breath after the present breath.

لَيسَ لَ ا ارِهٖ وُنِ اللّٰ كَاشِفَةٌ ۝٥٨

(53-58) and none but Allah can avert it. (51)

(51) That is, when the Hour of Judgment does arrive, you will not be able to stop it, nor your deities other than Allah have the power to avert it. Allah alone can stop it but He will not.

اَفَمِن هٰذَا الۡحَدِيۡثِ تَعۡجَبُوۡنَ ۝٥٩

(53-59) Will you, then, wonder at this? (52)

(52) The word hadh-al-Hadith as used in the original, signifies the whole teaching that was being presented in the Quran through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and marvel implies the marvel that man expresses on hearing a novel and incredible thing. The verse means this: That to which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is inviting you is the same that you have already heard. Now, is it this very thing at which you marvel and feel alarmed, and express wonder as if something very strange and novel was being presented before you?

وَ تَضۡحَكُوۡنَ وَ لَا تَبۡكُوۡنَ ۝٦٠

(53-60) Will you laugh at it rather than weep? (53)

(53) That is, instead of weeping at your ignorance and deviation you, on the contrary, are mocking, the truth.

وَ اَنۡتُمۡ سٰمِدُوۡنَ ۝٦١

(53-61) Will you occupy yourselves simply in merriment? (54)

(54) Two meanings have been given of the word samidun by the lexicographers.

Ibn Abbas, Ikrimah and Abu Ubaidah, the grammarian, are of the view that in the Yarnanite tongue sumud means singing and playing, and the verse alludes that the disbelievers of Makkah, in order to suppress the recitation of the Quran and to divert the people's attention away from it, would start singing in a loud voice.

The other meaning of it given by lbn Abbas and Mujahid is: Sumud means bending down the head out of arrogance; when the disbelievers of Makkah passed by the Prophet (peace be upon him), they would pass by him angrily with their faces lifted up. Raghib Isphahani in his Mafradat also has adopted the same meaning; accordingly, Qatadah has translated samidun into ghafilun and Saed bin Jubair into muridun.

فَٱسۡجُدُواْ لِلَّهِ وَٱعۡبُدُواْ ۝٦٢

(53-62) Prostrate yourselves before Allah, and serve Him. (55)

(55) According to Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Shafei and many other scholars, it is obligatory to perform a sajdah on the recitation of this verse. Although Imam Malik himself used to perform a sajdah here (as cited by Qadi Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi in Ahkam al-Quran), yet he held the view that it was not obligatory to perform a sajdah here, the basis of his view being this tradition of Zaid bin Thabit: I recited Surah an-Najm before the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he did not perform a sajdah. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Nasai). But this Hadith does not negate the incumbency of the prostration here, for it is likely that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not perform the sajdah then due to some reason but might have performed it later. Other

traditions on the subject are explicit that the prostration was always performed on this verse. Abdullah bin Masud, Ibn Abbas and Muttalib bin Abi Wadaah have unanimously stated that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this Surah for the first time in the Kabah, he had prostrated himself and along with him the whole assembly of the believers and the disbelievers had also fallen down prostrate. (Bukhari, Ahmad, Nasai). Ibn Umar has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited Surah an-Najm in the Prayer and prostrated himself and lay long in that state. (Baihaqi, Ibn Marduyah). Saburat al-Juhani states that Umar recited Surah an-Najm in the Fajr Prayer and performed a sajdah, then stood up, recited Surah al-Zilzal and performed the ruku. (Saed bin Mansur). Imam Malik himself has related this act of Umar in his Muwatta (Bab Maja fi Sajud al- Quren).